

Introduction

1. In this lesson we arrive at the ultimate point of Mark's gospel with the resurrection of Jesus.
 - a. This is the third of three essential Christian doctrines concerning Jesus: He was dead, buried, and resurrected.
 - b. In this lesson we consider both the reality and significance of Jesus' resurrection for our faith in Him as Savior and Lord and our practice as believers.
2. **Read Mk 16:1-8.**

A. Going to the Tomb (1-2)

1. These verses form the final slice of bread on top of our final Markan sandwich.
 - a. Two lessons back we laid the first slice of bread in our sandwich as we encountered the women who were witnesses of the death of Jesus on the cross.
 - b. In the last lesson we filled the middle of the sandwich with the account of Jesus' burial.
 - c. In this lesson we place the final slice of bread on top of our sandwich with Jesus' resurrection.
2. These women saw Jesus die on the cross. They saw where Joseph of Arimathea buried him. They now will see that He is not in the tomb but is risen from dead. They are the connecting links in the story.

B. At the Tomb (4-7)

1. Warren Wiersbe writes, "It was still dark when Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna (Luke 24:10) started out for the tomb (John 20:1), and they arrived at early dawn (Luke 24:1). Their first surprise was meeting two angels in the tomb (Luke 24:4; Mark focused on only one angel), and the third surprise was hearing the message they delivered. No wonder the women were amazed!" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 184).
 - a. The women did not have to worry about the stone because God or an angel of God (cf., Mt 28:2) had supernaturally rolled it back.
 - b. James Brooks writes, "The great devotion of the women is seen in two particulars: the expensiveness of the spices and their desire to anoint a body that had been dead for a day and a half. Some find the latter inconceivable in a hot climate where decomposition was rapid and claim the real purpose was merely to visit the grave (cf., Matt 28:1), but love often causes irrational actions. . . . The Jews did not embalm, and the use of spices was not to prevent decomposition but to offset its stench. The desire to anoint the body certainly indicates that the women did not expect a resurrection" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 268-9).
2. The angel is the first to preach the gospel from the empty tomb. (6-7)
 - a. What a comforting message. "Don't be alarmed (Gk., *Me ekthambeisthe*)" – This verb is only found elsewhere in Mk 9:15 (i.e., "Overwhelmed with wonder") and Mk 14:33 (i.e., "deeply distressed and troubled").
 - b. What an unexpected message. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. . . . He is not here."
 - c. What a powerful message. "He has risen (Gk., *egerthe*)! He is not here." (6)
 - d. What a hopeful message. "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you" (7)
3. Akin writes, "Luke (24:3-4) and John (20:12) inform us that there were actually two angels present, the number required to establish a valid witness (Deut 17:6; 19:15). Matthew (28:5) and Mark focus on the spokesman, the one who conversed with the women. . . . What a word of grace, forgiveness, hope, and promise. What a pledge for a new beginning. Peter would especially be grateful for this word!" (Akin, 361)
4. Jesus had prophesied His resurrection (cf., 8:31, 9:9,31, 10:34; 14:28), but His disciples, including the women, either did not hear or understand what He had said.

C. Fleeing from the Tomb (8)

1. “Trembling (Gk. *tromos*) and bewildered (Gk., *ekstasis*), the women went out “fled” (Gk., *ephugon*) the tomb. They “said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid (Gk., *ephobounto*)”
2. This is where the earliest and best manuscripts of Mark’s original gospel end.
 - a. The account of Mary’s encounter in Mark 16:9-11 may be an attempt to tell the rest of the story that seems to be missing at the end of the original account.
 - b. Mark 16:9-20 may be a later addition which we will discuss in our next lesson.
3. Sinclair Furgeson notes, “Should they not have returned home rejoicing in the news they had heard? Is there not something unexpected about this response? That in itself is a mark of its authenticity (if we were to invent the story we would not end it in this way). But it is more. In Mark’s Gospel, this fear is always man’s response to the breaking in of the power of God. It is the fear the disciples experienced when Jesus stilled the storm the fear of the Gerasenes when Jesus delivered Legion; the fear of the disciples as they saw Jesus setting his face to Jerusalem to die on the cross. This fear is the response of men and women to Jesus as he shows his power and majesty as the Son of God (Sinclair Furgeson, *Mark*, 271).
4. William Lane notes, “Fear is the constant reaction to the disclosure of Jesus’ transcendent dignity in the Gospel of Mark (cf., Chs. 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:50; 9:6, 32). In the light of this pervasive pattern, the silence and fear of the women are an indirect Christological affirmation. . . . The account of the empty tomb is soul-shaking, and to convey this impression Mark describes in the most meaningful language the utter amazement and overwhelming feeling of the women. . . . The ending leaves the reader confronted by the witness of the empty tomb interpreted by the word of revelation. The focus upon human inadequacy, lack of understanding and weakness throw into bold relief the action of God and its meaning” (William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 591-2).
5. Daniel Akin notes the supreme importance of the resurrection of Jesus when he writes, “Christianity stands or falls on the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. No resurrection, no Christianity. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul plainly writes, ‘And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.’” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 359).
6. Akin gives eleven Naturalistic or Alternative Theories That Reject the Resurrection (Akin, 362-4)
 - a. Swoon
 - b. Spiritual Resurrection
 - c. Hypnotic Hallucination
 - d. Visions
 - e. Legend/Myth
 - f. Stolen Body
 - g. Wrong Tomb
 - g. Lie for Profit – Religious hoax
 - i. Mistaken Identity (Gardner not Jesus)
 - j. Jesus’ Twin
 - k. Substitute (e.g., Judas, Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, a disciple?)
7. Akin also gives fourteen Evidences for the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus (Akin, 364f)
 - a. Failure of naturalistic theories to explain events
 - b. Birth of disciples’ faith and radical change in their lives
 - c. Empty tomb and discarded grave clothes
 - d. Women, who were not qualified as witnesses, were the first to see Jesus. This would not have made sense if the story were fabricated.
 - e. Change in day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday
 - f. Unlikely nature of mass hallucination
 - g. Numerous post-resurrection appearances (e.g., Mt 28, Lk 24, Jn 20-21, Acts 1, 1 Cor 15, Rev 1)
 - h. Fifty day interval from resurrection to first, bold public proclamation of gospel at Pentecost
 - i. Inability of Jewish and Roman leaders to disprove the empty tomb
 - j. Unexpected nature of Jesus’ bodily resurrection
 - k. Conversion of skeptics such as James and Paul
 - l. Moral character of eyewitnesses
 - m. Accepted character and claims of Jesus – Jesus predicted his death, burial, and resurrection.

8. Belief in the resurrection is ultimately a matter of faith

D. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection

1. Joseph rolled a stone across the entrance to Jesus' tomb, but that stone was rolled away by God's power at Jesus' resurrection. Are you ready to experience the power and joy of the resurrected Jesus alive and active in and through your life today?
2. What change is God working in you as you come to the cross of Jesus and the empty tomb?
3. Are you sometimes afraid to share what you know about Jesus and His resurrection with others? How can you overcome this fear?
3. What does the abrupt ending of Mark's Gospel communicate to you?
4. Is your faith in the resurrection of Jesus strengthened by this study?